

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KU

SUBJ: ARMS SALES TO KUWAIT - THE OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

REFS: A) KUWAIT 0546: B) KUWAIT 0561: C) KUWAIT 0612

SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT, FOURTH IN A SERIES, DEALS WITH KUWAIT'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH A SMALL BUT MODERN DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT. THE GOK WANTS MAJOR US ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE. OPTIONS ARE DISCUSSED AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF CONTINUED AND EXPANDED US ASSISTANCE ANALYSED. BECAUSE OF THE EXISTENCE OF A REAL THREAT TO KUWAIT, PRINCIPALLY FROM IRAQ, AND THE ABSENCE OF TRULY VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO US SUPPORT, THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT INCREASED ARMS SALES AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE BE EXTENDED TO THE GOK. IT IS BELIEVED THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT THREATENING POSSIBLE FUTURE US INITIATIVES TOWARDS IRAQ AND WITHOUT DANGER OF CONTRIBUTING FURTHER

TO REGIONAL INSTABILITY. END SUMMARY.

1. IN 1973 KUWAIT'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AUTHORIZED THE EXPENDITURE OF \$1.4 BILLION OVER FIVE YEARS TO MODERNIZE THE COUNTRY'S ARMED FORCES. WHILE DEFINITIVE GOALS IN ALL AREAS HAVE NOT YET BEEN DEVELOPED, THE GOK ENVISAGES INCREASING ITS AIR FORCE (WHICH IS FORMALLY PART OF THE ARMY) FROM 1000 TO 5000 MEN OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS TO INCLUDE TWO HELICOPTER SQUADRONS, TWO NEW ATTACK AIRCRAFT SQUADRONS AND ONE FIGHTERSQUADRON, A BATTALION OF IHAWK MISSILES, AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN BATTALION AND AN INTEGRATED AIR CONTROL SYSTEM. ARMY UNITS ARE TO BE KEPT AT ABOUT CURRENT STRENGTH, 8000-10,000, ORGANIZED INTO THREE SMALL BRIGADES EQUIPPED WITH MODERN ARMOR INCLUDING SELF PROPELLED ARTILLERY, TANKS AND ANTI-TANK MISSILES. WITHIN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, A DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO ESTABLISH A NAVY AS WELL OF ABOUT 1000 EQUIPPED WITH COASTAL PATROL CRAFT ARMED WITH MISSILES, AMPHIBIOUS HOVERCRAFT AND, POSSIBLY, SHORE MISSILE BATTERIES. FINALLY, THE GOK HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO ORGANIZE AND CONSTRUCT A NATIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER AND TO ESTABLISH A VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL DESIGNED TO BRING RECRUITS TO A LEVEL OF SUFFICIENT

LANGUAGE AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCE TO ATTEND FOREIGN (US/UK) MILITARY TECHNICAL TRAINING SCHOOLS.

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2. ADDITIONAL MEASURES WHICH KUWAIT IS TAKING TO ENHANCE ITS MILITARY POSTURE IS THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPULSORY (FOR ALL KUWAITIS) MILITARY TRAINING AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL (11TH AND 12TH GRADES) AND PUBLICATION OF AN AMIRI DECREE ESTABLISHING A BASIS FOR CONSCRIPTION. CONSIDERATION ALSO IS BEING GIVEN TO ACCEPTING WOMEN FOR CLERICAL AND MEDICAL DUTIES WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES ESTABLISHMENT.

3. KUWAIT RECOGNIZES THAT ITS EXISTING AND, IF PAST POLICIES ARE FOLLOWED, FUTURE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT WILL BE A DISASTER. ITS PRESENT ARMY IS ILL-EQUIPPED AND POORLY TRAINED. ABOUT ONE-HALF OF ITS ENLISTED MEN ARE SAUDI AND IRAQI TRIBESMEN. IT CURRENTLY DEPENDS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON 150 BRITISH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ADVISERS FOR GUIDANCE. LOGISTIC AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT IS PROVIDED BY A MOTLEY ASSORTMENT (MOSTLY CIVILIAN) OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS, PRINCIPALLY OF PALESTINIAN AND PAKISTANI ORIGIN. AIR DEFENSE ADVISERS ARE FURNISHED MOSTLY BY EGYPTIANS. INITIALLY THE GOK SOUGHT BALANCED PROCUREMENT AND ASSISTANCE, PRIMARILY FROM THE UK, US AND FRANCE. THIS HAS NOT WORKED. SENIOR DEFENSE OFFICIALS NOW RECOGNIZE THAT RECENT PURCHASES OF FRENCH AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS WERE A MISTAKE. THEY WANT TO SWITCH TO U.S. LINE ITEMS, WITH ASSURED LOGISTICAL SUPPORT. THEY HAVE GROWN WARY OF BRITISH ADVICE AND NO LONGER TRUST EITHER THEMSELVES OR THE BRITISH TO DEVELOP THE KIND OF MODERN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT THEY WANT. DESPITE THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED, MORE AND MORE THE GOK IS TURNING TO THE US FOR ASSISTANCE AS ITS ARMS MODERNIZATION PROBLEMS BECOME MORE PRESSING, OMISSIONS OF PLANNING MORE OBVIOUS AND AS OTHER SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE FAIL THEM.

4. KUWAIT REMAINS WILLING TO PURCHASE ARMS FROM FRANCE AND OTHERS, BUT PREFERABLY FOR THE CONFRONTATION STATES. EXCEPT FOR TANKS (THE BRITISH CHIEFTAIN IS PREFERRED, MAINLY BECAUSE OF DELIVERY SCHEDULES), THE GOK NOW WANTS MAJOR COMMITMENT FROM THE U.S. IN FORMING, EQUIPPING AND TRAINING ITS ARMED FORCES. THIS IS EVIDENT IN THE \$370 MILLION WORTH OF ADVANCED EQUIPMENT ALREADY PURCHASED FROM THE US AND IN THE LARGE NUMBER OF REQUESTS RECEIVED IN RECENT MONTHS FOR ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT AND ADVICE. ALSO INDICATIVE IS THE GOK'S RECENT WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE THE MOST DETAILED AND CLOSELY HELD PLANS TO THE USG CONCERNING ITS ARMS MODERNIZATION PROGRAM AND DEFENSE PLANNING. THE USG HAS
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NOT YET DECIDED WHAT ITS ROLE SHOULD BE IN HELPING KUWAIT MEET ITS DEFENSE NEEDS, AS PERCEIVED BY THE GOK. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THE GOK IS DETERMINED TO PROCEED WITH ITS ARMS MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, PREFERABLY WITH U.S. HELP, BUT WITHOUT IT IF NECESSARY. WITHOUT IT, THE FINAL PRODUCT WILL CERTAINLY REMAIN A HODGEPODGE AND AN INADEQUATE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT DEPENDENT IN LARGE DEGREE ON FOREIGN MILITARY ADVISERS OF DIVERSE ORIGIN, AND CONTINUED ANTAGONISM AND RESENTMENT TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES. WITH SUBSTANTIAL US HELP, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE, ALBEIT DIFFICULT, OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS TO ARRIVE AT THE KIND OF ARMED FORCES THE GOK WANTS, HELPEFULLY WITH SOME BENEFIT TO THE USG.

5. THE KUWAITI DECISION TO MODERNIZE AND EXPAND ITS ARMED FORCES IS BASED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON CONCERN REGARDING IRAQI INTENTIONS. REPEATED GOK EFFORTS TO OBTAIN GOI AGREEMENT TO RENOUNCE ITS

TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO KUWAIT AND TO DEMARCAT THE BORDER BETWEEN
THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN REBUFFED. IRAQI TROOPS CURRENTLY AND
PERIODICALLY IN THE PAST HAVE OCCUPIED TERRITORY CLAIMED BY KUWAIT.

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USINT BAGHDAD

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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THE GOK RECOGNIZES IT PROBABLY WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO DEVELOP A MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT ADEQUATE TO DEFEAT IRAQ IN ARMED CONFLICT, BUT IT IS DETERMINED TO ACQUIRE A DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY WHICH WILL ACT AS A GENUINE DETERRENT TO IRAQI ADVENTURISM AND WHICH COULD "BUY TIME" FOR OUTSIDE HELP IN THE EVENT OF AN ACTUAL IRAQI ATTACK.

6. A LESSER CONSIDERATION IS THE GOK'S DESIRE TO HAVE AVAILABLE A MILITARY FORCE CAPABLE OF AUGMENTING INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT (IN GOK EYES) OF INSURRECTION ON THE PART OF THE COUNTRY'S LARGE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY OR OTHER INTERNAL DISORDERS. (INTERNAL SECURITY WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE REPORT). BASICALLY, WHAT THE GOK SEEKS IS A DEFENSE-ORIENTED, INTEGRATED MILITARY ORGANIZATION ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO ONE-HALF A U.S. MILITARY DIVISION AND AIRCRAFT WING, WITH ANCILLARY NAVAL SUPPORT UNITS. AT LEAST SO FAR, THE GOK IS NOT SEEKING OFFENSIVE WEAPONS AND MOBILITY PERMITTING SIGNIFICANT AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE ITS TERRITORY. ACCORDING TO THE KUWAITI CONSTITUTION, THE GOK CANNOT HAVE AN OFFENSIVE ARMY.

7. KUWAITI CONCERN REGARDING IRAQI INTENTIONS APPEAR WELL FOUNDED. DESPITE CONTINUED PROTESTATIONS OF ARAB BROTHERHOOD, THAT LEFTIST-DOMINATED COUNTRY HAS BEEN CONSISTENT IN ITS POLICY OF EXTENDING AID TO DISSIDENT GROUPS IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, INCLUDING KUWAIT. IT RESENTS THE FAILURE OF OTHER ARAB STATES TO RALLY TO ITS CAUSE IN ITS DISPUTE WITH IRAN. THE GOK SUSPECTS IRAQI INTENTIONS AND FEARS COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THAT COUNTRY. THE FAILURE OF IRAQ TO WORK CONSTRUCTIVELY TOWARDS RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS WITH KUWAIT SUGGESTS THE GOI IS NOT YET PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE THE CONTINUED LEGITIMACY OF KUWAIT AS A NATION. THE PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF SOVIET TECHNICIANS AND MODERN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN IRAQ PROVIDES A LEGITIMATE BASIS FOR CONCERN NOT ONLY TO KUWAIT BUT TO THE LOWER GULF STATES AND USG AS WELL.

8. BOTH THE USG AND GOK WOULD WELCOME RESOLUTION OF OUR RESPECTIVE PROBLEMS WITH IRAQ AND A MORE PRODUCTIVE AND FRIENDLY FUTURE RELATIONSHIP. HOWEVER, FROM A STRICTLY US STANDPOINT OUR INTERESTS SEEM BEST SERVED AT PRESENT BY CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, BOTH HOSTILE FOR DIFFERENT REASONS TOWARDS IRAQ. THE US WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT IN THE NEAR TERM TO BE MORE EVEN-HANDED TOWARDS IRAQ, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE GOI REMAINS HOSTILE TOWARDS US AND THE TWO PILLARS OF OUR MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY,

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IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. IT CERTAINLY IS NOT IN OUR INTEREST FOR KUWAIT TO JOIN WITH IRAQ IN HELPING EXTEND SOVIET INFLUENCE FURTHER INTO THE GULF REGION. UNLESS A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH OCCURS SOON RESULTING IN GREATLY IMPROVED REGIONAL RELATIONS (WHICH SEEMS UNLIKELY), A REASONABLY STRONG AND CONFIDENT KUWAIT -- PREPARED TO RESIST IRAQ INTRUSION, WHETHER OVERT OR COVERT -- SEEMS DESIRABLE FROM THE US STANDPOINT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

9. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS NOT IN OUR INTEREST TO SEE KUWAITI MILITARY STRENGTH GROW TO AN EXTENT THAT KUWAIT POSES A SERIOUS THREAT TO IRAQ OR ITS OTHER NEIGHBORS. THE KIND OF DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT CURRENTLY CONTEMPLATED BY THE GOK SHOULD POSE NO REAL THREAT. THE COUNTRY IS TOO SMALL AND ITS RESOURCES TOO LIMITED FOR IT EVER TO BECOME A MAJOR MILITARY POWER, EVEN AMONG ARAB COUNTRIES. OUR INTERESTS WOULD SEEM WELL SERVED BY THE SMALL, MODERN AND EFFICIENT MILITARY FORCE PLANNED BY THE GOK.

10. WE MUST MAKE THE DECISION SOON AS TO WHAT OUR ROLE IS TO BE IN KUWAIT IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE MATTERS. WE CAN BE ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE SUPPLIERS OF EQUIPMENT OR WE CAN PROVIDE THE KIND OF ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE KUWAIT SEEKS. THE FORMER WILL PROVIDE SHORT TERM ECONOMIC GAINS FOR THE US, BUT IT WILL NOT, IN ITSELF, PROVIDE A BASIS OF LASTING FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION. IF THE DECISION IS THAT OUR ROLE IS TO BE THE PASSIVE SUPPLIER OF EQUIPMENT, IT SHOULD BE A CONSCIOUS DECISION MADE IN CONSONANCE WITH OUR NATIONAL INTEREST, NOT ONE MADE BY THE INERTIA OF OUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES. IF WE DECIDE TO HELP KUWAIT, IN THE EMBASSY'S JUDGEMENT OUR EFFORTS AND COMMITMENT SHOULD BE TOTAL AND ADEQUATE NUMBERS OF COMPETENT PEOPLE ASSIGNED THE TASK. A LESSER EFFORT WILL BENEFIT NEITHER KUWAIT NOR THE US.

11. THE DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND DEFENSE CURRENTLY ARE ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF OUR FUTURE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH KUWAIT. THE EMBASSY HAS RECOMMENDED AND CONTINUES TO ENDORSE THE VIEW THAT WE SHOULD TELL THE GOK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THAT WE ARE WILLING TO PROVIDE ALL APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE CONSISTENT WITH LEGITIMATE KUWAITI NEEDS AND OUR OWN AREA POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF US HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES, PROVIDED KUWAIT IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE POLITICAL RISKS INVOLVED AND TO UNDERWRITE THE COST OF ASSISTANCE EXTENDED. WE WOULD ENVISAGE INITIALLY A SMALL MILITARY ADVISORY GROUP WHOSE PRINCIPAL ROLE WOULD BE TO
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ASSURE THAT THE \$370 MILLION FMS PROGRAM ALREADY CONTRACTED FOR IS IMPLEMENTED EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY. THIS STAFF WOULD GROW, AUGMENTED BY TAFT AND OTHER SUPPORT GROUPS AS NECESSARY, AS CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE FMS PROGRAMS ARE IMPLEMENTED.

12. IN THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT THE ABOVE COURSE IS THE ONLY VIABLE
AND CONSTRUCTIVE OPTION OPEN TO THE USG. TO ABANDON OUR PRESENT
LIMITED EFFORTS, AS SUGGESTED BY SOME CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS, WOULD
RESULT IN WORSENEDED USG/GOK RELATIONS AND AN INEFFECTIVE BUT
POTENTIALLY POLITICALLY DANGEROUS KUWAITI DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT.
A CONTINUED PASSIVE ARMS SALES PROGRAM PROBABLY WOULD HAVE THE SAME
RESULTS. A TOTAL COMMITMENT WILL NOT EARN US THE ETERNAL GRATITUDE
OF KUWAIT, BUT IT COULD HELP PROVIDE: BETTER ASSURANCES THAT IRAQ
WILL STAY OUT OF KUWAIT, LIMITED BUT IMPORTANT US INFLUENCE OVER
FUTURE KUWAITI MILITARY ACTIVITIES; INCREASED SALE OF US PRODUCTS;
AND AN INCREASED US PRESENCE IN THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT PART OF THE

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WORLD. WITH GOOD LUCK AND GOOD SENSE WE WILL REMAIN ACTIVE AND INFLUENTIAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOR A LONG TIME. A STRONG US/KUWAIT MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WILL HELP US TO DO THIS. WE SHOULD DO THE BEST JOB POSSIBLE TO BENEFIT BOTH US AND KUWAITI INTERESTS.

13. ONE FINAL POINT MERITS ATTENTION. IF WE DO EXTEND SUBSTANTIAL MILITARY ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO THE GOK, THE EMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS A SERIOUS EFFORT TO AVOID THE INTER-SERVICE RIVALRIES WHICH SIMILAR PROGRAMS HAVE GENERATED IN IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. WHILE IT DOES NOT FIT THE MODEL OF THE TRADITIONAL MAAG, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THE SIZE AND NATURE OF THE MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM SOUGHT BY THE GOK WOULD MOST EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY LEND ITSELF TO DIRECTION BY A SINGLE DOD AGENCY, PERHAPS THE DEPARTMENT OF ARMY OR MARINE CORPS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT ALL NECESSARY ELEMENTS CANNOT BE DRAWN FROM ONE SOURCE, BUT TOTAL DIRECTION BY ONE AGENCY IS LIKELY TO PROVE MOST EFFECTIVE IN MEETING KUWAITI NEEDS AND IN PROVIDING THE KIND OF UNIFIED AND INTEGRATED DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT IN KUWAIT WHICH WOULD BEST SERVE US INTERESTS.
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